Chicago & North Western Railway Bridge No. 344
(Goette Road Bridge)
Spanning Goette Road
Merrimac vicinity
Sauk County
Wisconsin

HAER No. WI-39

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

Chicago & North Western Railway Bridge No. 344
(Goette Road Bridge)

HAER No. WI-39

Location:	Spanning Goette Road Merrimac vicinity, Sauk County, Wisconsin UTM: 16.282800.4807740 Quad: Baraboo, Wisconsin
Date of Construction:	1878
Present Owner:	Chicago & North Western Railway
Present Use:	Private railroad bridge
Significance:	The Goette Road Bridge is Wisconsin's earliest known example of a standard stone-arch railroad bridge plan used by several railroad lines throughout the nation and adopted by the Chicago & North Western Railway for six highway crossings in the State. The standardized railroad bridges are unique among the State's stone arch bridges for the excellent quality of their masonry and engineering.
Historian:	Lola Bennett Wisconsin Historic Bridge Recording Project August 1987

HISTORY

Located about 5 miles northwest of the village of Merrimac, the Goette Road Bridge was constructed by the Chicago & North Western Railway in 1878, as part of a general upgrading of the single-track line connecting the cities of Madison and Elroy, Wisconsin.[1] Apparently, the bridge replaced a wooden structure. After the economic depression of the mid-1890s, the railroad once again embarked on capital improvements, double-tracking the Madison-Elroy line between 1896 and 1899. Under this program, Goette Road Bridge was extended for double trackage in 1896.[2]

CHICAGO & NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY

The Chicago & North Western Railway actually began as the Illinois & Wisconsin Railway, which went into operation in 1854. Three years later, it consolidated with three small Wisconsin railroads and incorporated as the St. Paul & Fond du Lac Railroad Company. Then, in 1859, there were further mergers and a consolidation that created the Chicago & North Western Railway Company, which ran from Chicago to Green Bay, Wisconsin.

At least one hundred railway systems were merged into the present company at various points in its history, until the railroad covered nine midwestern states. The Chicago & North Western line constituted the first of three sections in America's first transcontinental railroad. Because of its size and central location, the Chicago & North Western Railroad becams a very influential railroading company in America.[3] (See HAER No. WI-24, Chicago & North Western Railway Bridge No. 128, for mors information on the Chicago & North Western Railway.)

DESCRIPTION[4]

The structure is a rock-faced, sandstone bridge with a single, semicircular arch. Spring two feet above grade, the arch rises 12 feet over a span of 24 feet. There are stepped, flared wing walls on both elevations. The wing walls are random ashlar; the rest of the masonry is coursed ashlar. The bridge rests on a limestone foundation, extending about 4 feet, 6 inches below grade. The elongated keystone, about two feet in height, is bordered by a tooled margin; the other ring stones have a tooled margin only on their bottom edge. The intrados display a pick-pointed finish. The bridge measures about 36 feet in length. A datestone above the keystone on the west elevation bears the inscription "1878."

SIGNIFICANCE[5]

The Goette Road Bridge is architscturally significancs as the State's earliest known example of a standard, stone arch railroad bridge plan used by several lines throughout the nation and adopted by the Chicago & North Western Railway

for six other highway croasing in Wisconsin. The standardized railroad bridges are unique among the State's stone arch bridges for the excellent quality of their engineering and masonry. Although the Goette Road Bridge was extended about 14 feet on ita east elevation in 1896, to make room for a second track, the addition matches the original fabric in both masonry and design. The compatibility of the addition with the original construction providea an excellent example of the architectural benefits of a standard plan.

FOOTNOTES

1 Annual Report of the Chicago & North Weatern Railway Company, 1880, 1898, 1899.

2 Ibid.

3 A Brief History of the Chicago & North Western Line, (Chicago: Chicago & North Western Railway Company, 1942).

4 Jeffrey A. Hess, "Intensive Survey Form for Bridge P-56-140", unpublished, (Wisconsin Department of Transportation, 1986).

5 Ibid.

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Annual Report of the Chicago & North Western Railway Company, 1880, 1898, 1899.

Hess, Jeffrey A. Intensive Survey Form for Bridge P-53-734. Unpublished, 1986. Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

Hess, Jeffrey A. Intensive Survey Form for Bridge P-56-140. Unpublished, 1986. Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

Hess, Jeffrey A. and Robert M. Frame. Historic Highway Bridgea in Wisconsin: Stone and Concrete Arch Bridges. Wisconsin Department of Tranaportation, 1986.